

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An interior panel for a vehicle, said panel comprising:
a phosphorescent material; and
a polymer matrix .
2. The interior panel as in Claim 1, wherein the phosphorescent material is dispersed within the polymer matrix.
3. The interior panel as in Claim 1, wherein the phosphorescent material is disposed on at least one surface of the polymer matrix.
4. The interior panel according to Claim 1, wherein the phosphorescent material comprises a non-oxide phosphor, an oxide phosphor, or a combination comprising at least one of the foregoing phosphors.
5. The interior panel according to Claim 4, wherein the non-oxide phosphor is selected from a group consisting of zinc sulfide, zinc sulfide doped with a transition metal, and zinc sulfide doped with a rare earth metal.
6. The interior panel according to Claim 4, wherein the oxide phosphor is selected from a group consisting of an oxide ceramic phosphor, an oxide ceramic phosphor doped with an alkaline earth metal, and an oxide ceramic phosphor doped with a rare earth metal.
7. The interior panel according to Claim 1, wherein the phosphorescent material comprises an alkaline-earth metal oxide aluminate.
8. The interior panel according to Claim 1, wherein the phosphorescent material forms a pattern on or in the polymer matrix.

9. The interior panel according to Claim 1, further comprising:
a light transparent material.
10. The interior panel according to Claim 9, wherein the light transparent material transmits light having wavelengths of about 200 to about 800 nm.
11. A vehicle roof assembly, comprising:
a roof wall extending between an interior portion and an exterior portion of a vehicle; and
an interior panel comprised of a phosphorescent material and a polymer matrix, the interior panel disposed on an interior surface of the roof wall.
12. The assembly according to Claim 11, wherein the phosphorescent material is dispersed within the polymer matrix.
13. The assembly according to Claim 11, wherein the phosphorescent material is disposed on at least one surface of the polymer matrix.
14. The assembly according to Claim 11, wherein the phosphorescent material comprises a non-oxide phosphor, an oxide phosphor, or a combination comprising at least one of the foregoing phosphors.
15. The assembly according to Claim 11, wherein the non-oxide phosphor is selected from a group consisting of zinc sulfide, zinc sulfide doped with a transition metal, and zinc sulfide doped with a rare earth metal.
16. The assembly according to Claim 11 further comprising:
a light-conducting component disposed between a location external to the vehicle and a point adjacent to the interior panel to transmit external light to the interior panel for exciting the phosphorescent material to glow for a period of time following exposure to the external light.

17. The assembly according to Claim 11, wherein the light-conducting component comprises an existing window of the vehicle.

18. A method for providing a light source in a vehicle, wherein the light source is free of an external power supply, the method comprising:

exposing a panel disposed on an interior surface of a wall of a vehicle to an external light source, wherein the panel comprises a phosphorescent material and a polymer matrix; and

emitting visible light from the phosphorescent material and into the interior portion of the vehicle upon exposure to the external light source or upon discontinuation of the external light source.

19. The method according to Claim 18, further comprising diffusing the radiant energy produced from the external light source with the phosphorescent material.

20. The method of Claim 18, wherein the wall comprises a roof wall.